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For Envoy at Vatican Tradition of Unity

To the Editor:

Now that the Vatican and Kremlin are on person-to-person speaking terms, wouldn't it be appropriate for the greatest Protestant nation in the world to have the same kind of diplomatic representation in the Holy City as it has in the unholy city of Moscow?

To establish an American embassy in Vatican City would not only have splendid ecumenical implications on the political level, but would be a very valuable asset to the United States in the operation of its diplomacy.

I am sure that many other Protestants share with me a great respect for the international communication system of the Vatican. It has access to a great deal of diplomatic intelligence from places we can reach only through the dubious methods of the C.I.A. Even though the Vatican no doubt cooperates with our Government informally, we should show our gratitude for that by making a real diplomatic partnership for all the world to see.

This is, of course, no new idea. Franklin Roosevelt, in even more perilous times, had his own ambassador at the Vatican, but no formal diplomatic relations which could be formalized by a fully staffed embassy with the usual diplomatic status. Efforts were made during President Truman's administration at least to follow the F.D.R. precedent, but Mr. Truman opposed it on the principle of separation of church and state, which is the rather irrelevant argument traditionally made against Vatican recognition.

After all, the Roman Church dates from centuries of church-state unity—a tradition which in some countries cannot be forgotten even today. But the Church has certainly proved that as far as the United States is concerned it has no intention of trying to run the Government.

To make the suggested move at this time would offer further evidence that our Southern President, who has taken the lead in fighting the segregationist tradition of his South, can likewise break away from the Southern Protestant notion that most things Catholic are bad. He looks like the man who could do it. JOHN H. CRIDER

White Plains, N. Y.

May 9, 1966

The writer was formerly editor in chief of The Boston Herald.